

THE PALATKA NEWS.

Entered at the Palatka post-office as mailable matter of the second class.

Published at Palatka, Fla., on Fridays by
RUSSELL & VICKERS

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THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON.

Marvelous is the influence by which the Christmas spirit moves the hearts of men to joyful and generous impulses. It seems as if in this era of the year an unseen angel touches the invisible spring of an unused door in normal human nature and fills them with song and sunshine.

What a world of generous endeavor and what a summer time of happiness is awhirl around us!

Those whom Providence has prospered are busy with their loving devices to make home happy, to crown the waning year with goodness, to reward fidelity, patience and love, to reap the joys that flock into the Christmas season like homing doves from a far circling flight.

None could deny them all the riches of such experience, but let us not forget the larger and holier significance of this season whose glory is the advent of Him who came to minister to the poor and the sick and the downcast, and not to be feted and filled with costly gifts.

He came to serve and not to be pampered. He came to bless those to whom "blessing" was the strange name of an unknown experience.

His works that have caused Him to hold the supreme admiration of mankind, the worship of millions and to stir the emulation of philanthropists the world over were his gifts to the poor, the lame, the sick, the blind and the outcast.

Here is the divine suggestion to every man and woman who would know really the full proportions and power of happiness.

Throw out the circle of your presence and generosity to take in some of those whom you know are without the cheer and content of the Christmas time.

Look out from your homes of ease and plenty by the back way to those hovels where you know is want and aching bodies and paralyzing helplessness.

Reach out that hand of thine, into which a Christian civilization has poured more than your sufficiency, and scatter the sunlight and healing offerings among those who shrink in the shadows.

Every man and woman who would experience the true Christmas spirit should distribute with grace and humanity to the poor and sick.

It is a title to Him whom you celebrate. It is a duty that casts a searchlight on the way to heaven.

It is an exercise that stirs the inward spirit, as none other can and widens the soul to greater capacity for love and happiness.

Try it. Test it. Taste the joy of it.

CHRISTMAS HOME-GOING.

As Christmas approaches, what heart that is not enlivened with greed and selfishness does not ache with sweet longing for the old home?

At this mystic season, if at no other, memories of childhood become smiling angels that beckon us back through the years.

Idle sentiment? Not at all.

Already the Christmas-time tide of steering travel from the new world to the old has set in. Within the past two weeks upwards of 10,000 voyagers have sailed from this country to their old homes across the sea. It is the same every year, and increases in numbers as this country ages.

It is a powerful influence that impels these people to sacrifice their slim savings for the long journey. There are fathers and mothers to embrace again, there are former friends to greet, there is good news of successes and there is good cheer for the plodding and the aged ones back at home.

Far more than mere sentiment lies in the fact that this Christmas-time procession of home-goers carries with it millions of dollars in good gold.

All over our land Christmas brings back to the old home the children and the children's children, once more to set our lips to the spring of love that is pure and undebilitated.

Whether we turn back to it from successes and joys or from failures and sorrows, the old home is over a sanctuary of virtues and the sweetest earthly interpretation of heaven.

The king of finance and the prodigal once more become brothers at the old home and learn that the things which seem so important to us in this world are, after all, but a thin veneering.

Whether we be wise or ignorant, rich or poor, great or little, the old home offers us satisfactions and inspirations to be found nowhere else in the world.

For many of us the old home may no longer exist except in memory. But if in memory it is cherished, then whatever the disappointments, the deceptions, the despairs of life, we may turn for new hope, new courage and renewed ideals back to the old home, where love glows steadily against the world's coldness.

If Christmas had no other meaning than just this—that it turned us back to the old home, that nursery of the infinite, and to the loves and dreams and longings and resolves of youth, the day would still be the happiest and most helpful one in all the year.

And those of us to whom the old home is but a memory will come to mind, especially at this season, the words of Elizabeth Akor's beautiful poem:

"Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight, Make me a child again just for to-night! Mother, come back from the echoless shore, Take me again to your heart as of yore, Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care, Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair, Over my slumbers your loving watch keep,— Rock me to sleep, Mother, rock me to sleep!"

OUR HOLIDAY PAPER.

This edition of the Palatka News is nothing more than the natural expression of Palatka enterprise incident to the holiday season.

No effort was made to coax advertisers into taking space. Retailers wanted it and when the opportunity offered, bought. Manufacturers seemed pleased with the chance presented them to give wide publicity to their expanding industries, and wholesale dealers have been so prosperous that they seized the opportunity for doing a little "growing" over the achievements of the year. That is all.

All have testified to the value of the News as a medium for reaching the people, and for this appreciation of the paper its publishers are thankful. They have no Jacksonville newspaper annex to blow their horn were they so disposed. They are therefore spared the temptation to disregard the Scriptural injunction to "let another praise thee and not thine own lips." Now that they know home people have been praising them they are grateful.

The editor of the News has tried to make the paper a true record of local current history. He has also endeavored, to the best of his ability, to make the paper's necessarily circumscribed influence tell for personal and civic virtue. He has failed to measure up to his ideals but will continue striving.

The paper today is filled with the holiday messages to the people of Putnam county from our live merchants. The stores of Palatka are filled with all kinds of useful and ornamental goods suitable for holiday gifts, and there is not the shadow of an excuse for any citizen going outside the county to make purchases.

While the News is disposed to ask pardon for taking a pride in itself, it asks none for being proud of the aggressive merchants of Palatka, and it asks you, reader, to carefully peruse the messages which they send you through this paper.

GLEANINGS.

A BOY AND HIS SWEETHEART.

Many years ago one of the best of mothers fell "asleep at the gates of light." All of her children, of course, revered her memory; but one of them was the babe of war-time birth, and owing to the anxieties and excitements of the period, and the continued absence of the father, extraordinary affection and devotion was, doubtless, lavished upon him.

Perhaps it was because of this that after the mother's death, and for many years, this boy never retired for the night without placing at his bedside a chair, under the childish impression that his mother would occupy it and watch him to sleep.

When other lads would write in sand or carve on trees the names of sweethearts dear, this lad would trace with knife or stick the name of his sweetheart—his mother's name.

When but a boy, he chose his sweetheart's name as one to be given his own daughter; and when in later years he wrote some tales of love and life, his heroine, good and true, with signal honor and renown, bore the name he loved so well. So, through boyhood's days this precious memory was enshrined within his heart; the purity, the devotion, the sacrifices, the sorrows of this patient, God-loving and God-serving woman was ever before him, often deterring him from evil and sometimes inspiring him for good.

"Happy be with such a mother! Faith in woman-kind beats with his blood, and trust in all things high comes easy to him."

There are living today many such mothers. If the boys could only appreciate their loving kindness while they live, life would be sweeter to them. If those who now have the companionship of the boy's best friend could only know all they will lose when that companionship ends, the pathway of the mothers of the world would today be strewn with roses.

The regrets for thoughtless acts and indifference to admonitions now felt and expressed by many living sons of dead mothers will, in time, be felt and expressed by the living sons of living mothers. The boys of today who do not understand the value of the mother's companionship will yet sigh—with those who already know—this song of tribute and regret:

"The hours I spent with thee, dear heart, Are as a string of pearls to me; I could not then, every one apart, My rosary."

"Each hour a pearl, each pearl a prayer, To still a heart in absence wring; I tell each bead unto the end, and there A cross is hung."

"O memories that bless—and burn! Oh, might gain and bitter loss! I kiss each bead and strive at last to learn To kiss the cross."

Sweetheart, To kiss the cross," —RICHARD L. MURTAGH in the Commoner.

DANGER OF DRINKING WATER.

A lecturer was making an address recently in which he took occasion to illustrate the pitfalls of the platform orator. "One pitfall," said he, "is the unwise choice of examples in proofs."

"A commonplace lecturer," said he, "wished to prove to his audience the deadly power of whisky. Accordingly he caused a drop of water to be magnified and thrown upon a magic lantern screen. Worms bigger than pythons, crabs bigger than elephants, spiders the size of a ship, fought together in the drop of water like fiends in the infernal regions."

"The lecturer now caused a drop of whisky to be added to the water."

"Watch, friends," he said, "watch the whisky's effect."

"The effect was marvelous. The liquor killed all those ferocious horrors instantly. Their vast claws and tentacles and feelers stiffened. All became peaceful and still."

"An old lady in the front row whispered hoarsely in her husband's ear:

"Wal, Jabes, that settles me. I'll never drink water again 'bout puttin' some whisky in it."

THE MERCILESS.

(This poem was first published in the Tallahassee Capital. It was written by an old man, above 80, a convict in the Florida penitentiary. His case was before the board of pardons last summer, but we do not recall whether it received action favorable to the old man or not.—Ed.)

There are some shriveled souls and men Who puff with holy writ, defame Their neighbor's doves, and cry unclean, Then seek God's mercy without shame.

Poor fools—in frailty all men are kin, The sainted Peter fell from grace, The man who never shared in sin Is traitor to the human race.

With scarce one impulse to control, Without one passion to express, The sinless thing without a soul Is ever the most merciless.

Expand, enlarge your bigot bounds, Embrace the brotherhood of woe, Unless no more your slander bounds, But let the hunted sinner go.

But there are those whose lives are broad, Whose eyes flash forth a soul-like ray, Still proving something of a god Is stamped upon our human clay.

It is such men whose deeds repair Our shattered faith still so resigned; In spite of all the wrongs we bear, We cannot help but love mankind.

From the Deep

(Original.)

My dear wife came to me literally from out the deep. One afternoon the mate called to me from the forecabin that he saw a boat on the starboard quarter. The events that followed in rapid succession are as fresh in my mind as on that eventful day, but never till now have I been completely happy, for not since then till now have I been free from dread.

I ordered the vessel put off a couple of points, and as we neared the boat I could see that it was an officer's boat, probably the captain's gig that had belonged to some ship. I could see something lying in the bottom, and as we got the boat under our bows it was plain that the something was a woman. She was brought aboard unconscious and carried below. I gave up my room to her and directed that she have every attention. The truth is that when I saw her lying on the deck oblivious to all about her there was something in her face that drew me strangely to her.

As soon as she was provided for I ordered her boat to be hauled on deck, and I examined it. It was an old boat, and it had been so battered that I could not read the name. There was nothing about it to identify it. At 9 o'clock that night the woman came to herself, but the stewardess said that she was too weak to be questioned. The next morning the newowner had revived, sufficiently to talk, but said that she could not remember a single event in her past life. I had known a similar case where a man had been shipwrecked and nearly starved. On recovering consciousness he had, like this woman, forgotten the past. I directed the stewardess to search the woman's clothing for some mark, and she found on an undergarment the letter Q. This was all there was in the way of possible identification.

In time the woman came on deck and sat wrapped in blankets, revived by the fresh air. For the want of a better name we called her Miss Queery. She was about twenty-two years old, but whether she had been married or not of course we couldn't tell. Not all of us considered her pretty, but to me there was something infinitely more engaging in her expression than mere beauty, an expression reflecting some great past grief. I took her into my heart, and she has kept her place there to this day.

We had picked up Miss Queery not far out of New York on a voyage to the Pacific and Japan. I insisted on her making the ship her home until we returned to America, for, in the first place, I loved her, and in the second, common humanity forbade my leaving her in a foreign country to shift for herself. She had no other course but to accept my hospitality and completed the long voyage with us.

Our return was one persistent pleading that she would become my wife. She resolutely declined on the ground that she might have a husband. In vain I argued that the chances were that one of her age was not likely to have been married. She said she would not take that one chance. At the same time she gave every evidence that she loved me. Indeed, the fact that we must be separated by an uncertainty was as great a grievance to her as to me.

Before sailing on another voyage I discussed with her what course we should pursue. I proposed that we take action to discover her identity. Then if she had not been married our course would be plain. If it came out that she had a husband living, she could choose between us.

"Your past life is blotted out," I said, "and there is no law to prevent your marrying whom you like." To this she replied, "Suppose after marrying you it should come to my knowledge that I had a husband, would you consider it my duty to leave you?" "Certainly not," I replied. "If you knew today you had a husband living, a husband identified with that past obliterated life, and married me, I would not blame you."

This ended the argument, for she gave her consent, though the marriage was to be of the Scotch order, simply mutual pledges in presence of witnesses.

Three voyages my wife made with me, during which we were both supremely happy. At times I noticed a dread cross her brow and knew what she feared. But I laughed at her fears and assured her that on the high seas nothing could part us.

We were stopping at a hotel between our third and fourth voyages. One morning my wife took up a morning paper—she always scanned the papers when ashore—and, suddenly glancing at her, I saw her shiver with some intense emotion. As soon as she had collected herself she said:

"It has all come back to me." And, handing me the paper, she pointed to an item giving an account of the killing of Richard Quilman, a seafaring man, in a drunken broil in a sailors' boarding house. "My husband!" she exclaimed. "He was drunk when he put me in the boat. I had lived a life of horror with him and was glad when he sent me out on to the ocean to die."

So it was that the name of the man she had once dreaded brought back all at once an existence that had been a blank for years. Her father and mother were living, and she at once started for the New England village where they lived. She found them well and returned, after a brief visit, in time to sail with me. MARTIN PEASELEY.

Railways in 1840.

A writer to the New York Mirror of 1840, in the course of a rhapsody on the railway, says: "Dueling and changing horses and separate rooms are at an end, our light literature must now become woven with steam, our incidents must arise from blowups and have been made over broken legs, while here the novelist will have to record the falling in of a tunnel, the only chance left for a touch of the sublime." Trains then proceeded under wonderfully good condition occasionally at the awe inspiring speed of thirty-five miles an hour as a maximum.

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